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Chairperson: Ms. Ogwu ..... (Nigeria)
later: Mr. Metelitsa (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Belarus)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 49: Sustainable development (A/63/66, A/63/76-E/2008/54 and A/63/225)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/63/304; A/C.2/63/3)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/63/296 and A/63/297)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/63/347 and A/63/351)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/63/294; A/C.2/63/3)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/63/294; A/C.2/63/3)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/63/294; A/C.2/63/3)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its tenth special session (A/63/25)

1. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/63/304), said that the interrelation between the economic, social and natural worlds underpinned the three-pillar framework of sustainable development; consequently, a holistic strategy should be implemented in order to grow the global economy, address social inequities and protect the ecosystems. Unsustainable production and consumption were eroding natural stocks of wealth and the challenge posed to the global development agenda was as daunting and urgent as that caused by the financial crisis.

2. Many developing countries were struggling to address the macroeconomic fallout of high domestic food prices and inflationary pressure, and the challenge facing Africa was especially serious. The food crisis epitomized the failure of the international community on several interrelated fronts; it had failed to protect land and water, to invest in agriculture and agricultural research, and to empower women, especially women farmers. The Secretary-General had reacted promptly by creating a High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis to coordinate the short- and long-term actions of the United Nations and the Secretariat looked forward to guidance from the General Assembly on the complex negotiations for policy decisions at the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

3. In summary, the main themes of the report of the Secretary-General were the interconnectedness of the world and the need for integrated solutions to the challenges that lay ahead, with broad participation in implementation, and a more robust global partnership for development.

4. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/63/296) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations" (A/63/297), he said that, in the case of the small island developing States, the report stressed the urgency of providing increased financial and capacity-building support, owing to their vulnerability to the impact of climate change as well as to natural disasters and the vicissitudes of the global markets.

5. **Sir John Holmes** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/63/351), said that the report provided an overview of progress in implementing disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action at the national, regional and international levels over the past 12 months. Although good progress had been made on a variety of fronts, the world was not on track to achieve the sought-after outcome of the Hyogo Framework, which was a substantial reduction of disaster losses by

2015; therefore, a major scaling-up of efforts and resources was needed urgently.

6. Some of the key points of the report were the escalating impact of disasters in terms of the loss of lives, properties and livelihoods owing to unsound development practices. Multiple events made those affected doubly vulnerable in the face of each new disaster and recalled the fundamental importance of disaster risk reduction, particularly the need for early warning systems and disaster-resistant construction.

7. A crucial element for the future was to ensure synergy between the disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation agendas. The recent Ministerial Meeting convened by the Secretary-General on reducing disaster risk in a changing climate had provided clear evidence of increased collective commitment to accelerate the implementation of disaster risk reduction and to find innovative, robust solutions to the increasing disaster risks created by a rapidly changing climate.

8. The challenge was to translate the commitment into concrete action at all levels. Government entities responsible for climate change policy and for disaster risk reduction needed to coordinate the use of funds and resources. Member States were encouraged to prepare national adaptation plans drawing on the Hyogo Framework and to consider setting targets for public spending on multi-year local and national disaster risk reduction programmes.

9. Much useful progress had been made in disaster risk reduction, but much remained to be done. The risks and solutions were known, so failure to invest and to act decisively was a dereliction of duty to future generations. The devastation caused in Gonaives, Haiti, by the onslaught of four successive hurricanes or tropical storms, provided a persuasive illustration of the crying need for disaster risk reduction measures.

10. **Mr. de Boer** (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), introducing his report on the thirteenth session of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (A/63/294, chapter I), said that the Bali sessions had achieved an important political breakthrough with the Bali Road Map. The Map included ongoing work related to adaptation, technology transfer and financing of climate change action, as well as actions to be completed by the end of 2009 for adoption at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

11. The negotiations had progressed in 2008 by gathering ideas and proposals and clarifying positions on many issues. At the most recent negotiating session in Accra, Ghana, in August, the Parties had requested the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention to compile proposals for presentation at Poznán, to serve as a preliminary version of a negotiating text. Three political essentials had to be met for an ambitious agreement to be reached in Copenhagen: clarity concerning the nature of commitments, the means of mobilizing financial resources, and the necessary institutional arrangements.

12. Given the limited time before the Copenhagen Conference, it was critical that the Climate Change Conference in Poznán deliver concrete results. Ministers would need to focus on arriving at a shared vision for long-term cooperative action that would translate into positive political guidance for the process and advance negotiations significantly. Progress would also be sought with regard to ongoing work on adaptation, technology, capacity-building, and improving the geographical coverage of the clean development mechanism projects.

13. Climate change was a sustainable development issue, closely linked to economic development, finance, energy and agriculture, and should be addressed in that context. The current financial crisis did not justify delaying action, because clean industry and investment had proved that they could offer long-term profits and had the potential to create millions of new jobs. The financial turmoil could actually provide an opportunity to address both the financial and the climate change crises together.

14. **Mr. Djoghlaf** (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing his report (A/63/294, chap. III), said that it would require an unswerving, collective, long-term effort, as well as a change in approach, to reach the 2010 target of achieving a substantial reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss under Millennium Development Goal 7.

15. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which had met in Bonn in May 2008, in many ways epitomized that new

approach to the unprecedented challenges of the loss of biodiversity compounded by the potential impact of climate change. The decisions adopted ushered in a new era of enhanced commitment to and implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. In addition, the Bonn meeting had adopted a gender action plan in recognition of the vital link between women, poverty and biodiversity.

16. He hoped that, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya in 2010, universal participation in the Convention would be achieved with the accession of the three remaining countries. Lastly, he urged the Second Committee to give impetus to the decisions adopted at the Bonn meeting and energize the United Nations system to collaborate for the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

17. **Mr. Gnacadja** (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa) said that, during his first year in office, he had undertaken a series of reforms aimed at the effective implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018) adopted at the eighth session of the Conference of Parties held in Madrid in 2007. He had taken pains to emphasize that the Convention was the only multilateral environmental agreement on land and soil degradation and that countries must be helped to adapt to climate change. Political commitments on mitigating the effects of climate change must be translated into practical and substantial action.

18. Another priority had been to strengthen the role of science and technology in the work of the Convention, and to identify voices that would carry the message of the Convention loud and clear. Land degradation was taking place in Europe, Asia and Central America but Africa's situation remained the worst. By 2050, half the world's arable land would no longer be productive as a result of desertification. Over many decades, mankind had created a vicious circle: the degradation of the atmosphere caused the degradation of the land, and vice versa. The challenge was to tackle land degradation and climate change as a single problem. For example, organically managed soils could convert carbon dioxide from a greenhouse gas into a food-producing asset. Soils contained more carbon than was found in vegetation and the atmosphere combined. Decision makers at all levels should pay due attention to land.

19. The note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Convention, contained in chapter II of document A/63/294, provided an update of activities under the Convention since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 62/193. Most related to the implementation of the ten-year strategy at the corporate and policymaking levels.

20. At the corporate level, he had been authorized, at the extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties held at Headquarters in November 2007, to realign the programmes and staffing structure of the secretariat in order to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. Four substantive units had been established, coordinated by the executive direction and management unit and supported by conference and administrative services. The secretariat had also started the preparation of its multi-year strategic workplan and a costed biennial work programme, following a results-based management approach, in October 2007. The result of that process appeared in the draft four-year strategic plan, which dealt with policy, and the draft two-year operational plan, which set out the secretariat's work in more detail. The reforms aimed to enhance the secretariat's responsiveness to the needs of States parties and to upgrade its analytical and knowledge-brokering functions by encouraging coalition-building and system-wide cooperation to deliver the objectives of the strategy. They also aimed to find improved ways of dealing with emerging issues and developing mechanisms or legislative tools to support sustainable land management. The joint work programme between the global mechanism of the Convention and the secretariat had been completed, the aim being to ensure consistency in the delivery of services and strengthen cooperation at every level.

21. In connection with the fourth objective of the 10-year strategy, the secretariat had started consultations with relevant organizations to foster cooperation in specific areas of competence. One outcome was the memorandum of understanding between the secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa, signed in March 2008. Given that the Convention had been built on the premise of partnership, similar arrangements with other bodies were under consideration.

22. At the policymaking level, the secretariat had, jointly with the German Government, organized a high-level policy dialogue on the theme "Coping with today's global challenges in the context of the strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification". The dialogue had reaffirmed that the Convention was the systemic and worldwide response to sustainable development challenges affecting land and ecosystems. Issues at the core of the Convention had also been reviewed at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as set out in paragraphs 37 to 41, and the need to increase the allocation of financial resources to the Global Environment Facility focal area on land degradation in the next replenishment cycle had been established.

23. Given the intricate relations between climate change, biological diversity, land degradation, drought and desertification, it was essential to find synergies between the three Rio Conventions. As stated in paragraph 35 of the report, the policy was to utilize the ecosystem approach and to implement policies provided for under the three Conventions. The report enumerated a number of practical measures taken to raise public awareness, contribute to the improvement of the global environment and foster strong scientific backing for sustainable policies. The report concluded with three observations and recommendations by the Secretary-General on action that might be taken by the General Assembly.

24. **Mr. El-Habr** (Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for West Asia), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the oil slick on Lebanese shores (A/63/225), recalled that the bombing of the el Jiyeh power plant by Israel in July 2006 had caused great environmental damage. Following assessment studies by United Nations and other international and national agencies, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 61/194, which called on the Government of Israel to assume responsibility for adequate compensation for Lebanon for the repair of environmental damage caused. At the sixty-second session, the Secretary-General had presented a report (A/62/343) and the General Assembly had adopted resolution 62/188, reiterating the concerns expressed in General Assembly resolution 61/194 and calling for a further report.

25. In June 2008, his office had once again taken on the coordination of the United Nations inter-agency task team. Representatives of UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had met to identify progress made, taking into account the contributions of other agencies, including the World Bank. Meetings had been held with the Lebanese Ministry of the Environment and with a committee chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to exchange information and updates on progress achieved.

26. The final paragraph of the report commended the efforts of the Lebanese Government and the United Nations system, urged the Government of Israel to take the necessary action on compensating Lebanon, asked Member States, international organizations, other institutions and the private sector for their continued support for Lebanon and recommended the establishment of the eastern Mediterranean oil spill restoration Fund.

27. *Mr. Metelitsa (Belarus), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

28. **Ms. Castaño** (Director of the UNEP New York Liaison Office), introducing the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its tenth special session (A/63/25), said that crises were often seen through the narrow lens of some immediate concern, such as high food or fuel prices, and not from a broader perspective. Solutions to the more immediate crises, however, must take account of the environment as a whole. That was the very foundation of sustainable development. UNEP had contributed to the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the preparation of the Comprehensive Framework for Action on the food crisis. It had also contributed to action on biofuel production, taking into account both human food needs and the sustainable nature of such production. It had joined forces with other agencies and stakeholders to address the challenges of climate change and such related issues as poverty eradication, disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

29. The special session, held in Monaco in February 2008, had been attended by 56 States members and 82 non-members of the Governing Council, 23 United Nations bodies, 5 specialized agencies, 10 intergovernmental organizations and 113 non-governmental organizations. She drew attention to the discussions by ministers and heads of delegations,

which appeared in annexes II and III of the report. The discussions had focused on globalization and the environment; the mobilization of finance to meet the climate challenge; international environmental governance; and United Nations reform. The findings of the fourth Global Environment Outlook had provided the special session with up-to-date information on trends in the environment on a global level. Decisions had been adopted on chemicals management, including mercury and waste management; sustainable development of the Arctic region; the Medium-term Strategy for the period 2010-2013; an international decade for addressing climate change; and the Global Environment Outlook: environment for development.

30. The decision on the Medium-term Strategy was of particular significance, since it was central to the reform of UNEP and the efforts to make it a more focused and results-based organization. It would also enable UNEP to attain its objectives under the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building, which would be coordinated through UNEP regional offices. UNEP was building strategic alliances with partners both from within the United Nations family and from civil society and the private sector.

31. **Mr. Blake** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that simultaneous action was needed on all three pillars of sustainable development. A coordinated, integrated and balanced approach was essential.

32. He welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/63/304). Discussions at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held in May 2008, had provided valuable guidance on how to further the implementation of Agenda 21 as it related to the thematic cluster of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. He hoped that the Commission's seventeenth session, to be held in May 2009, would result in a consensus and action-oriented outcome based on open and inclusive negotiations. Further implementation of Agenda 21 and of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development required greater emphasis on sustainable consumption and production patterns, led by developed countries, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Despite the myriad activities undertaken since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, the fundamental challenges that had been identified remained and, in some cases, had worsened. In that connection, he welcomed Brazil's offer to host a "Rio+20" conference in 2012.

33. Small island developing States were both particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of climate change and unable to address such challenges effectively by themselves. Adequate resources must be allocated to the Small Island Developing States Unit and its website, SIDSNet. The Group supported the efforts of Caribbean States to gain international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development. The international community should recognize the Sea's importance to the economic well-being and sustenance of people living in the area and assist the countries concerned in taking appropriate steps to preserve and protect it.

34. Recognizing that human activities exacerbated the impact of natural disasters was an essential step in disaster planning and mitigation. Storms, droughts and floods, though inevitable, need not necessarily lead to humanitarian crises. Actions should target the most vulnerable and include early warning system development and increased preparedness and risk reduction. Developing country vulnerability was being exacerbated by various global challenges, which in turn made the world's poor more exposed to risk and more vulnerable. Vulnerability to natural hazards increased the scale and scope of disasters and made it harder to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Financial resources to address that problem had thus far been insufficient. The Group supported the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its mandate.

35. Climate change should be discussed within the context of sustainable development and Committee decisions used to promote its three pillars in an integrated, coordinated and balanced manner. Participants in the Bali Climate Change Conference had recognized the need for deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions. Emerging science suggested that even deeper cuts might be needed. Ongoing negotiations under the Bali Action Plan must therefore

result in a successful and ambitious outcome. Developed countries must participate actively in negotiations and take the lead in addressing implementation gaps by complying with their Kyoto Protocol obligations and by facilitating developing country adaptation. They must also meet their financing and technology transfer commitments. While the United Nations should help developing countries formulate policies that attracted climate change-related investment, nationally appropriate mitigation actions must be enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner. Developed countries had a binding commitment to provide financial resources. Such resources must be considered additional to official development assistance (ODA).

36. Desertification, drought and land degradation continued to pose a serious threat to development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The situation was exacerbated by climate change and climatic variability. All relevant United Nations agencies should cooperate under the aegis of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, to ensure a holistic response to the threats posed to sustainable development. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) played a key role in helping countries combat desertification and reclaim degraded land. The international community should substantially increase its allocation of resources to the GEF focal area on land degradation during the next replenishment cycle. He commended the efforts of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to continue its administrative renewal and reform and to streamline its functions in order to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and bring them into line with the ten-year strategic plan and framework. He looked forward to the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, when JIU was scheduled to present its findings on the assessment of the Global Mechanism.

37. Committee discussions on biodiversity at the current session should be framed by the decisions taken at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Bonn in May 2008, and by the conclusions reached at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, held in Barcelona earlier that month. The target of significantly reducing biodiversity loss by 2010 seemed an even greater challenge than before. While most biodiversity was found in developing countries, all countries were custodians of the world's ecosystems and all countries benefited from the services they provided. He was therefore pleased that 2010 would be the International Year of Biodiversity. Moreover, he welcomed the adoption at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity of a road map for the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use by 2010.

38. He welcomed the report of the UNEP Governing Council on its tenth special session (A/63/25); he hoped that the Council's decisions would guide UNEP in its efforts to address environmental challenges. The Medium-term Strategy for the period 2010-2013 was an important step in the Programme's efforts to become a more effective, efficient and results-focused entity and should enable UNEP to implement its mandate more effectively by building on its existing expertise and comparative advantage in the six priority areas selected. He expressed concern at the slow pace of implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. While UNEP played an important role, it was even more important for development partners to demonstrate their commitment to the Plan by providing the resources needed for its implementation. The United Nations should demonstrate its commitment to addressing environmental challenges by substantially increasing its allocation of resources to the UNEP regular budget.

39. Lastly, current challenges must not cause fundamental issues to be overlooked and must not be used to delay implementation.

40. **Mr. Hua** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that efforts to address current needs must not compromise progress for future generations. Sustainable development should be pursued at all levels. He hoped that the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable

Development would be a success. As the midway point of the Commission's multi-year programme of work approached, the Commission could be further improved so as to strengthen its contribution to eradicating poverty, changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and protecting natural resources.

41. The international community was not on track to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss significantly by 2010. The European Union was extremely concerned by the unprecedented rate of biodiversity loss and remained committed to implementing strong political responses in order to meet the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Sustained efforts and concrete action were needed if the 2010 target was to be met. Implementation of national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity must be strengthened and, where appropriate, integrated with development programmes. The European Union was determined to play an active and constructive role in the implementation of and follow-up to the decisions adopted at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Bonn in May 2008, and to that end welcomed the progress made in the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use and stressed that the target date for its conclusion was 2010; welcomed the scientific criteria for the identification of marine areas in need of protection adopted in the Azores, Portugal, in October 2007; and expressed its readiness to contribute fully to the establishment of an effective international science-policy interface on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being. Biodiversity loss was inextricably linked to land degradation and climate change. Greater cooperation and coordination on those issues at all levels would facilitate sustainable development policies. It was also necessary to have effective cooperation between the various Rio Conventions.

42. The European Union had made climate change a priority and pursued its efforts to build international consensus on a new climate change regime. It was determined to continue to play a leading role and was convinced that the packet of measures on energy and climate currently being discussed in Brussels would play a central role in the formulation of a European response in line with the European Union's commitment to reduce its emissions to at least 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

43. The international community must make combating desertification a priority. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification had taken a major step forward with the adoption at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, held in Madrid in 2007, of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) and a number of decisions relating to the reform of its institutional framework. The European Union considered that such actions would help accelerate and orient the Convention's future work and therefore supported their implementation and the efforts of the Convention secretariat. Climate change, desertification and land degradation were inextricably linked. The related challenges would not be met without close cooperation between the Rio Conventions and greater attention to desertification and land degradation in development and climate change policies.

44. The European Union was satisfied with the discussions held at, and the outcome of, the tenth special session of the UNEP Governing Council, held in Monaco in February 2008. In particular, it welcomed the Medium-term Strategy for the period 2010-2013 and made a plea for its full implementation. Noting the need for a more ambitious reform of international environmental governance, he expressed the hope that the informal consultations currently under way would lead to the adoption, by consensus, of a balanced and ambitious resolution that provided the basis for discussions on such reform.

45. Natural disasters were a major obstacle to sustainable development. The European Union was determined to help at-risk communities implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and thereby reduce their vulnerability to risks and adapt to climate change. A comprehensive approach by the entire international disaster reduction system was essential. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was key in that regard. The European Union was currently preparing a strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries. The strategy would offer a new comprehensive approach comprising development cooperation and humanitarian assistance for all developing regions and encompassing disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. A greater linkage between disaster risk reduction and

climate change adaptation presented a number of advantages.

46. The European Union enjoyed a long history of cooperation with small island developing States, for which climate change was a major challenge. Today, it was working towards the effective implementation of its global alliance with the developing countries most affected by climate change. The alliance would be a forum for discussion and a framework for exchanges in a number of key areas relating to climate change and disaster risk reduction.

47. The attainment of the MDGs would depend to a large extent on the international community's ability to achieve the sustainable development of cities. To that end, all parties must cooperate at all levels and a renewed commitment be made to implementing the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Programme should continue to assist Member States in meeting the objectives agreed by the international community. By focusing on its main areas of action, UN-Habitat would be able to better perform its role as a catalyst for sustainable urbanization. In that connection, the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for 2008-2013 provided a solid basis on which to strengthen UN-Habitat and bring its institutional reform to a successful conclusion.

48. **Mr. Sorcar** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said that the world was more united than ever in combating climate change. The road to the Bali Climate Change Conference had been filled with hope. Unity must now be translated into action.

49. If agreement were to be reached by 2009, the climate change discourse must be depoliticized. A drastic cut in emissions required drastic measures. Developed countries must make a unilateral, meaningful and unconditional commitment to reduce their emissions. Comparable commitments should be made by advanced developing countries. The post-Kyoto agreement must protect the most vulnerable countries and recognize their special and compelling needs.

50. Adaptation remained key for least developed countries' survival and development and required resources to be mobilized at all levels. Indeed, the funding currently available was minuscule in comparison to the tens of billions of dollars needed to meet adaptation needs. Serious consideration should therefore be given to the proposal whereby developed countries would provide 0.5 to 1 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) as new and additional funds to combat climate change. Resources must be distributed equitably and least developed country participation in the clean development mechanism broadened. Annex I parties, meanwhile, should provide further financial support to the implementation of the Nairobi Framework.

51. The post-Kyoto agreement must ensure that vulnerable countries had access to eco-friendly and cost-effective technologies. To that end, he proposed establishing a technology transfer board to facilitate technology transfer for sustainable development in the least developed countries.

52. The challenges posed by ever more frequent and devastating disasters were magnified by climate change and soaring food prices. Building resilience to natural disasters was critical. Investment in disaster risk reduction must be increased substantially if the Hyogo Framework of Action was to be implemented. Resources currently fell short of requirements. While national Governments bore primary responsibility for responding to emergencies, their efforts must be supported by adequate international assistance. Disaster risk reduction and adaptation measures shared common theoretical and methodological components. A better integration of the two provided a tremendous opportunity to achieve sustainable development. Lastly, he agreed that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat should be strengthened. Careful consideration should be given to alternative financing methods, including secondments from agencies and Member States.

53. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, in its efforts to address the current financial and economic crisis, the international community must not neglect other problems. Sidelining energy and food security and climate change would not lead to sustainable economic recovery. Rather, efforts must focus on long-term sustainable growth. Advancing the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, provided the foundation for a durable global solution. The three pillars of sustainable development must be strengthened to ensure long-term economic growth, social development

and environmental protection. To that end, a genuine partnership for prosperity must be established.

54. A fresh approach was needed, where environmental sustainability complemented rather than opposed development. To secure such an approach, reforms were required. An inclusive, transparent and fair international financial architecture was the keystone of sound sustainable growth. Reforms should recognize that sustainable development could not thrive without food security. A second green revolution that ensured global food security and promoted rural prosperity was urgently needed. Moreover, revitalized global agricultural development would help alleviate the pressures of urbanization and ensure decent work for all. Reforms were also needed to prevent natural disasters from reversing years of development gains.

55. Reforms should also recognize the complex interrelationship between climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, drought and desertification. To that end, synergies between the Rio Conventions must be promoted. The Bali Action Plan offered a valuable opportunity to address the challenges of climate change in a comprehensive manner. Finance and technology transfer from developed countries to developing countries underpinned global climate cooperation. Financing to reduce deforestation-related emissions was particularly important.

56. He welcomed the adoption at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity of a road map for the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use by 2010. The momentum generated by the decision to make 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity should be used to pursue a more efficient and coherent implementation of the Convention's objectives and achieve a significant reduction in biodiversity loss. The International Year should be used to review two decades of sustainable development and renew commitments. The United Nations was a key player in the attainment of existing environmental goals, supported by the international environmental governance structure.

57. At the thirteenth ASEAN Summit, held in 2007, ASEAN leaders had undertaken to strengthen regional cooperation on energy, the environment, climate change and sustainable development. Countries in the region were deepening cooperation on a wide range of activities and had agreed to explore the safe and sustainable use of alternative energies. The challenges of urbanization, meanwhile, were being addressed through the Cool ASEAN, Green Capitals Initiative. Ten cities had received a reward for their efforts towards environmental sustainability. ASEAN was also working to create safer communities amid natural disasters, drawing on the lessons learned from the 2004 Asian tsunami and other recent disasters. Its support for other relevant initiatives demonstrated its commitment to pursuing a green development agenda.

58. **Mr. Muita** (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that, in the area of sustainable development, environmental progress should complement economic and social progress. He urgently called for sustainable solutions to environmental challenges that took into account poverty, hunger, environmental protection and underdevelopment. In spite of the current global crises, efforts to further international cooperation for the funding of environmental programmes and projects and climate change adaptation should continue unabated.

59. He welcomed the focus on Africa's needs at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the recent High-level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs and the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, and hoped that the negotiations would yield tangible results in terms of support to Africa's sustainable development efforts. It was important to involve all stakeholders in sustainable development actions. The full and speedy implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus was essential if progress was to be made.

60. Small island developing States were increasingly vulnerable; without the support of the international community, their sustainable development efforts would be at risk of stagnating. A coordinated, coherent and systematic approach, together with the financial and technical support of the international community, was critical to the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. He therefore reiterated his call to the international community, particularly the developed countries, to honour their commitments in those agreements.

61. The Hyogo Framework for Action must be fully implemented. With that in mind, the international community needed to examine measures to improve the response capacity of affected nations and the assistance it could provide to those nations. There too, the financial support of developed countries was urgently needed.

62. Action by all countries, particularly the developed countries, would be required to address adaptation to climate change, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. The discussions of the Committee should provide impetus and political support to ongoing processes by promoting global consensus on climate change and should contribute to the forthcoming Poznán Conference on Climate Change. Desertification and land degradation continued to pose a threat to sustainable development, particularly in Africa. The African Group called for increased funding for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to support implementation of its strategic plan as well as national plans of action to combat desertification in African countries.

63. It was of the utmost importance for the negotiations on the international regime on access and benefit-sharing to be completed within the established time frame. Conservation of biological diversity could not be achieved without the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Greater progress must be made towards implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity by 2010.

64. The outcome of the tenth special session of the UNEP Governing Council, particularly with regard to the proposed medium-term strategy for the period 2010 to 2013, was critical to the future work of UNEP. The urgent and effective implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building would reflect the international community's commitment to translating agreements into concrete actions, particularly with regard to the environment. However, if UNEP was to succeed, it must receive adequate financial and technical resources as well as capacity-building. He called on the United Nations to increase its allocations to the regular budget of UNEP and urged donors to scale up their support to UNEP activities.

65. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, rather than focus exclusively on the financial crisis, it was crucial to continue efforts to reduce social inequality. The international community must work with the Commission on Sustainable Development to reach tangible results that helped countries fulfil their commitments on sustainable development. The five items to be considered in the 2008/2009 cycle of the Commission were equally important and must be addressed in a balanced manner. As the cycle involved policy negotiations, the programme of work must allow sufficient negotiating time. With that in mind, he proposed that the outcome of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting in February 2009 should be an initial negotiating text, to be distributed prior to the seventeenth session in May 2009.

66. The international community must increase international cooperation and develop concrete proposals in order to achieve the goal of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. He supported the work of the Ad-Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing and the adoption of the road map for the conclusion of the regime on access and benefit-sharing by the most recent Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. A successful agreement would not only support the objectives of the Convention, but would also help eradicate poverty, achieve the MDGs and protect and manage the natural resources in developing countries.

67. Desertification and land degradation increased the vulnerability of communities, resulting in higher poverty and migration rates, and thus creating potential threats to food security and to natural resources. In that context, it was important to continue supporting the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the efforts under way to implement its regional implementation annex for Latin America and the Caribbean.

68. No country was able to deal with climate change alone. Developing countries in particular faced major challenges in adapting to the effects of climate change; international cooperation and technology transfer were therefore required. The financial crisis should be approached as an opportunity to further efforts to combat climate change, as both issues required investment in energy efficiency, promotion of renewable sources of energy and incentives to stimulate economic growth. The Rio Group was

committed to strengthening the international climate change regime established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, as well as to ongoing negotiations under the Bali Action Plan, with a view to achieving an effective regime on climate change in 2009, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

69. Natural disasters were a major concern, as they not only threatened to reverse the progress made towards the MDGs and national development plans, but also diverted financial resources that might be otherwise used. International cooperation on technology transfer must be strengthened to enable countries to develop early warning systems, contingency plans and adaptation strategies. It was important to promote disaster management policies that simultaneously addressed climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The Rio Group was committed to strengthening the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and looked forward to the second meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which would provide further strategic guidance on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

70. **Mr. Snowden** (United States of America) said that the Commission for Sustainable Development had galvanized action and helped shape the agendas of a wide range of organizations around the world. Its results-oriented programme of work had effectively integrated the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Given the success of the Commission and in light of its schedule of cycles, the necessity of a Rio + 20 summit, currently under consideration, should be closely examined. Another summit could detract valuable attention from ongoing efforts to fulfil commitments and to implement Agenda 21 and have limited additional benefits, if any. Such a summit would also disrupt the Commission's cycle of work linked to Agenda 21 that was to end in 2017. He questioned whether such a summit would be the best use of financial and human resources in the current economic climate and above all advocated continuing progress towards existing commitments and spending resources on actions that directly produced results.

71. The ongoing General Assembly process on international environmental governance was an important aspect of the global sustainable development agenda. It was clear, however, that opinions varied widely on the process, including on what would constitute true improvements to international environmental governance. Nevertheless, all stakeholders agreed that it was important to safeguard the environment and work towards sustainable development. The work of UNEP and UNDP on the Poverty and Environment Initiative was an excellent example of leveraging expertise and partnering effectively. The initiative directly addressed sustainable development and built capacity on the ground. All such positive developments were the result of recent efforts to improve environmental governance; such efforts should be given time to succeed.

72. The United States remained committed to a comprehensive and effective post-2012 arrangement to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and was fully engaged in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. He urged the Committee to fully support that process and to allow climate experts a better chance at success by avoiding prejudgement of their negotiations.

73. **Mr. Liu** Yuyin (China) said that the international community must strengthen policy coordination, ensure food and energy security, and maintain sustained economic growth so as to lay an economic foundation for sustainable development. Developed countries, in particular, must take concrete actions to provide new and additional financial assistance, reduce and cancel debt, curb trade protectionism, open markets and transfer technology to the developing countries. The United Nations should continue to play a leading role in sustainable development and to promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

74. The development of small island developing States was an important part of global sustainable development. The international community should strengthen cooperation with such States, taking account of their special needs, with a view to effectively implementing the Mauritius Strategy. Commitments in the areas of financial assistance and technology transfer must be honoured to build the capacity of those States and to help them achieve sustainable development.

75. Disaster reduction must be given priority attention as a strategic issue in economic and social

development. Preventing and responding to natural disasters required enhanced international and regional cooperation. The international community should continue to improve disaster reduction policies and humanitarian relief cooperation, with the United Nations at its core; to enhance natural disaster monitoring and early warning; to strengthen developing countries' capacity in disaster prevention, preparedness and reduction; to ensure long-term, stable and predictable core funding for disaster reduction; and to increase support for the Central Emergency Response Fund.

76. Climate change should be addressed within the framework of sustainable development. The current financial crisis had made addressing climate change more challenging. Members of the international community should join forces to respond to current economic difficulties; at the same time, they must not slacken their efforts to tackle the problem of climate change.

77. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol constituted the basic international legal framework for addressing climate change. The international community should continue to rely on the Convention and its Protocol as the main channels for international cooperation and negotiations and should also implement the Bali Road Map in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The Chinese Government attached great importance to the issue of climate change and had adopted a series of successful measures to conserve energy and protect the environment.

78. The international negotiations under the Bali Road Map were at a critical stage. China supported reaching a fair, reasonable and effective post-2012 agreement and supported the due role of the United Nations in that process.

79. While some progress had been made since the entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the trend of global desertification had been neither effectively controlled nor reversed. His Government supported the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018). The international community, particularly developed countries, should recognize the urgency of the problem of desertification and the link between desertification and poverty; meet its obligations in funding and technology transfer; support the efforts of developing countries to combat desertification; help developing countries achieve sustainable development; and ensure comprehensive and effective implementation of the Convention.

80. The Chinese Government supported strengthening international environmental governance. In doing so, the foremost priority should be to build developing countries' capacity in environmental protection. International environmental governance must be approached within the framework of sustainable development in order to ensure a balance between economic growth, social development and environmental protection. The improvement of international environmental governance was a gradual process that should be fully discussed and effectively advanced.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.